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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 22, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 22, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

BOLGE: AKP (Justice and Development Party) Adana Provincial Chairperson and Adana MPs from AKP paid a visit to the chairmen of Chamber of Commerce (ACC), Chamber of Industry (ACI) and Commodity Exchange (ACE), who were all reelected after the chamber elections. During their visit in ACC, Adana MPs were asked questions about their lack of cooperative effort and not being in harmony. The MPs, rejecting these criticisms, could not agree on the economic well being of Turkey, when asked about their opinions on Turkey's economic prospects.

CUMHURIYET: Karin R|sjorgensen, an MP from the European Parliament, and Louise Feilberg, her assistant, paid a visit to Efkân Ala, Governor of Diyarbakir, and press was not allowed access to their meeting. R|sjorgensen stated that women's rights and honor killings were among the issues they discussed.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: A gun attack in Hazro district of Diyarbakir killed a person. Mayor Hamit Ergin and his brother were wounded. The event, which sparked the incident, reportedly was the dismissal of a municipality employee. Police control was tightened in Hazro and press was not allowed into the district.

EVRENSEL / CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Tens of thousands celebrated Newruz in Diyarbakir and Batman. People chanted slogans in support of (Abdullah) Ocalan and the flags of the PKK/Kongra-gel were waved. Tuncer Bakirhan, DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) leader, criticized the government during his address to the crowd. Bakirhan said that extra-judicial killings increased in the region during the term of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government and invited PM Erdogan to solve the problems of the (southeastern) region together with the Kurds and their representatives. Leyla Zana, during her speech, allegedly stated that Diyarbakir embraced the "democratic society project" of Ocalan. Zana added that the democratic republic that the Kurds envisage should not be construed as Kurds giving up their identities. Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakir Mayor, said, "The time of war and conflict has ended. Today is the time for reconstruction".

ZAMAN: The Turkish government denied claims that the government would amend the law to enable the retrial of terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan. Faruk Celik, AKP (Justice and Development Party) Group Acting Chairperson, said that when he talked with PM Erdogan, Erdogan strongly denied such claims and did not understand why such claims were being made. In a separate article, Zaman paper claimed that the "democratic confederation" that the terrorist leader Ocalan reportedly proposed is aimed at creating a state within a state and urged the Kurds to disregard the laws of the countries, in which they live. However, the paper also quoted Ocalan as saying "'Democratic confederalism' is not a state system, it is a democratic system without a state."

OZGUR GUNDEM: Unidentified assailant(s) attacked DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) Gaziantep Provincial Headquarters. Vakkas Kilic, DEHAP Gaziantep Provincial Chairperson, said that they are being attacked each time an event concerning them raises public interest. Kilic further added that it was to no avail to bring the case to the Security Office, since the perpetrators have never been found in the past incidences.

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